

## Lecture Four: The Simulation Theory [ST] and a Concluding Thought

### A. WHAT IS SIMULATION THEORY?

- [ST] is primarily a view about the *methodology* of making OM-judgments. We'll consider what [ST] can say about the *epistemology* of OMs in D.
- [ST] says: OM-judgments are *not* inferred from beliefs about circs/behaviour (unlike [TT] and [AT]). Rather, I *imaginatively identify* with the Other, consider the world from their point of view, and see what states in imaginatively come in to, using my own mental processes and reasoning capacities. The resulting imagined state is then attributed to the Other.
- Simulation uses my capacity to think about *my own* mind hypothetically (“How would I feel if...?” / “What would I do if ...?” / “What would I believe if ...?”). I can put myself into the Other’s situation. But also:
 

“One tries to make adjustments for relevant differences. In chess, for example, a player would make not only the imaginative shifts required for predicting ‘what *I* would do in his shoes’, but the further shifts required for predicting what *he* will do in his shoes. To this purpose the player might, e.g. simulate a lower level of play, trade one set of idiosyncracies for another, and above all pretend ignorance of *his own* (actual) intentions.”<sup>i</sup>
- Simulation can be used both to *predict*, and to *explain*, but not in all cases – the worse chess player, perhaps can’t predict the better player. But this doesn’t seem like a problem for [ST] – in fact it seems to tally with experience.

### B. INTRA-SIMULATIONIST DIFFERENCES

- Status of [ST] – an empirical claim about sub-personal mechanisms (“off-line simulation”) or an *a priori* claim about *personal-level capacities* (for discussion see esp. [ ii ])?

- Relation between [ST] and [TT] – some think simulation is essential to making OM-judgments, but perhaps one way amongst many (incl. theory-use – Heal (in various places)); some think that any use of theory *rests on* historical uses of simulation (Gordon [ iii ]); some think that [ST] is a rival to [TT]
- [ST] and conceptual questions – is [ST] relevant to these? Heal thinks it is [ iv ]; Goldman thinks it isn’t [ v ]

### C. TWO INITIAL OBJECTIONS REBUFFED

- How do we get started? - Some simulations look like they proceed from an initial set of beliefs about what the Other believes. E.g.

“I may know of my friend [M] that she believes that p1, p2...pn, and has set herself to reflect on whether q; I would like to know what conclusion she has reached. [...]”<sup>vi</sup> What I do then is to “think about the states of affairs that p1-pn and their relation with the state of affairs that q. This thinking leads me to entertain (in some distinctive mode) the thought that q, upon which I then attribute to M the belief that q.”<sup>vii</sup>

But how do I get to find out that M believes p1-pn? How can simulation get me these beliefs about M’s beliefs?

The answer depends on the nature of the propositions, and on whether S and I are in – in some sense – *the same situation*. But in certain cases I will simply project certain of *my own* beliefs onto S. There are all sorts of situations in which we *presuppose* that others share our beliefs. This is a primitive form of simulation; it involves my using my own mind as a basis for making judgments about yours. But I don’t need to start with beliefs *about* your beliefs. I just start with my own beliefs and attribute them to you. Is this epistemologically ok? We’ll consider this in D.

- Doesn’t simulating require us to *theorize*? (Dennett says so (1987 [100]):

“How can [simulation] work without being a kind of theorizing in the end? For the state I put myself in is not belief but make believe belief. If I make believe that I am a suspension bridge and wonder what I will do when the wind blows, what ‘comes to me’ in my make believe state depends on how sophisticated my knowledge is of the physics and engineering of suspension bridges. Why should my making believe I have your beliefs be any different? In both cases, knowledge of the imitated object is needed to drive the make believe ‘simulation’ and the knowledge must be organized by something rather like a ‘theory’.”

Response: Goldman [ viii ] & Gordon distinguish *process-* and *theory-driven* simulation. The suspension-bridge simulation is *theory-driven* in that it requires the simulator to employ theoretical principles in simulation the suspension bridge. Psychological simulation is process-driven. All it requires is that the *process* the simulator goes through is isomorphic to the process being simulated. Heal [ ix ] makes a related distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how. Know-that is theoretical knowledge. But simulation uses knowledge-how; is a certain kind of *ability* to recreate the thinking of the Other. This doesn’t require knowledge of theory.

#### D. EPISTEMOLOGY OF OM-JUDGMENTS

1. The simulation process doesn’t take an argumentative shape. Heal gives a nice outline of one kind of simulation [ x ]:

At t1: I judge that M believes that p1-pn and is interested in whether q

At t2: I entertain reflectively the contents p1-pn

At t3: This reflection leads to my entertaining the content that q

At t4: I conclude that M believes the content that q

So where does the justification come from? In particular, how am I justified in moving from *entertaining that q* at t3 to concluding *that M believes that q* at t4?

3. Goldman [ xi ]:

“Ostensibly, the theory is a version of the ‘analogical’ theory of mental state ascription. It seems to impute to interpreters inferences of roughly the following form: ‘If he is psychologically like me, he must be in mental state *M*; he is

psychologically like me; therefore, he is in mental state *M*.” (my underlining)

But this appearance, says Goldman, is misleading. We can be externalists: I don’t need to *believe* that he is like me. It just needs to be *true* that he is. And judgments formed by simulation are justified if simulation is a *reliable* process

4. Heal: *is it* a reliable process?! [ xii ]

“All that is required for the sequences to be commendable and knowledge-producing is that going through them reliably produces true beliefs. When, however, we become aware of what we’re doing, epistemological conscience requires us to ask whether and why this kind of sequence is a reliable producer of true beliefs. The reliability depends on certain things being so. But what things? We need to know the answer to this question if we are to be convinced that the method is indeed defensible [...] The appraisals required by a responsible externalism push us in the direction of making our reasonings more defensible from an internalist point of view.”

Two possible arguments to *rationaly* ground t1-t4:

- a. Having considered p1-pn, I find that p1-pn *entail* q; *M is rational*, so given that she believes p1-pn, M will believe that q.
- b. Having considered p1-pn myself, *I came to believe that q*. M is like me, so M will believe that q.

(a) and (b) both presuppose that M is minded. And if I give these explanations in *justifying* t1-t4, it looks like I do believe (a) or (b) after all. So we’re back to square one, viz., where we were at the end of the lecture on [AT].

#### E. CONCLUDING REMARKS: SWITCHING PERSPECTIVES

1. Where we’ve go to: Looks like [ST] rests, *epistemologically*, on [AA]. Goldman says: not if we’re externalists. Heal says: a *responsible* externalism involves having beliefs about similarity/rationality of Other. So [ST]

seems to rest on [AA] after all. We saw [AA] presupposes there are OMs, so we're back to square one!

2. And [TT] was no good, since it left open the possibility that *I myself* don't have a mind. That will be the case if FPsy is a *false* theory. *Whether or not I have a mind* then turns out to be an empirical question. But what got the ep worry about OMs started was the feeling that there's some *asymmetry* between my relation to my own mind and my relation to other minds. And this asymmetry survives even if it does turn out that there are no minds – including my own. So it looks like *what* TT explains is something orthogonal to what wanted explaining, since what we wanted explaining is still there to be explained, *even if* there are no minds *in the sense TT understands 'minds'*.
3. So far we have been trying to justify *general* OM judgments (“Other people have minds”) on the basis of *specific* OM-judgments (“Anna is in pain/believes that P” etc.) We might think we'd *have to* do things this way round. But I want to question this, and suggest that we can reject the hyperbolic doubt *first*, and *independently* of asking how *specific* OM judgments are justified. If we've legitimately rejected hyperbolic skepticism, then [AA] and simulation are legit. methods of justifying specific judgments.
4. Justifying the rejection of hyperbolic skepticism (a sketch): Think what knowledge we'd be left with if we didn't have knowledge that OMs existed. In particular, we'd have no knowledge through *testimony*, so no knowledge of science, history. We would also not have knowledge of anything which requires for its existence the existence of OMs, incl. the arts, institutions, conventions, including *laws* and *language*, and so on. If our concept of knowledge ruled out that we have knowledge of OMs, then it would be a very different – impoverished – concept of *knowledge*. Conclusion: knowledge of other minds is a kind of fundamental knowledge, on which much other knowledge rests. Its essential to my concept of *knowledge* that one thing I know is that there are OMs. If I didn't, then I couldn't know most of the things I take myself to know.

5. Another way of putting the point: as a transcendental argument against the skeptic. The argument starts from premises that the OM-skeptic will accept – that we know that (say) the earth is round. Then it says that knowing this presuppose that there are OMs (in one way or another). It thus shows the connection between something the skeptic accepts and something she doesn't. To be consistent the skeptic has to give up knowledge of *both* or of *neither*. If neither can be given up then acceptance of OMs is justified by its necessity for acceptance of most other knowledge. If both are given up then we're left with a *much* more pervasive skepticism. There is no particular worry *about knowledge of OMs* left – the worry is now about a *huge* trance of our worldly knowledge.

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<sup>i</sup> Robert Gordon, “Folk Psychology as Simulation,” in *Folk Psychology*, ed. Martin Davies and Tony Stone, Readings in Mind and Language (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 63.

<sup>ii</sup> \* Jane Heal, “Co-Cognition and Off-Line Simulation: Two Ways of Understanding the Simulation Approach,” in *Mind, Reason and Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91–114.

<sup>iii</sup> \* Robert Gordon, “The Simulation Theory: Objections and Misconceptions,” in *Folk Psychology*, ed. Martin Davies and Tony Stone, Readings in Mind and Language (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 100–122.

<sup>iv</sup> \* Jane Heal, “Lagadonian Kinds and Psychological Concepts,” in *Mind, Reason and Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196–222.

<sup>v</sup> Alvin Goldman, “Interpretation Psychologized,” in *Folk Psychology*, ed. Martin Davies and Tony Stone, Readings in Mind and Language (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 74–99.

<sup>vi</sup> Jane Heal, “Other Minds, Rationality and Analogy,” in *Mind, Reason and Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 131.

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>viii</sup> Goldman, “Interpretation Psychologized,” 85.

<sup>ix</sup> \* Heal, “Lagadonian Kinds and Psychological Concepts,” 196.

<sup>x</sup> Heal, “Other Minds, Rationality and Analogy,” 132.

<sup>xi</sup> Goldman, “Interpretation Psychologized,” 92.

<sup>xii</sup> Heal, “Other Minds, Rationality and Analogy,” 133.